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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
MEASURES TO ELIMINATE INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fifth year

Letter dated 29 February 2000 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to refer to the letter dated 18 February 2000 addressed to you from the Prime Minister of Lebanon (A/54/759-S/2000/135, annex), and the letter dated 22 December 1999 addressed to you from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations (A/54/689-S/1999/1272).

These letters serve only to obscure the fact that the continuation of violence in southern Lebanon is the direct result of the policies of the Governments of Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, in supporting and encouraging terrorism by Hizballah and other organizations, while rejecting available means for resolving the conflict.

It should be recalled that Israel has repeatedly extended to Lebanon the invitation to negotiate a solution to the conflict, which would restore peace and security to our common border and which would have prevented the tragic loss of life in the area. Instead, Lebanon, together with the Syrian Arab Republic has opted to allow the conflict to continue and the human toll to rise. The perpetuation of the violence, therefore, is of their own making.

In addition, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic continue to support a terrorist campaign aimed against the peace process and against the existence of a neighbouring State, in stark violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations and its resolutions. Hizballah, which Lebanon has adopted as "the Lebanese national resistance" (see letter dated 24 March 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to you (A/53/878-S/1999/333)), makes clear that its "resistance" is against the entire peace process and against Israel itself, not merely its alleged activities in Lebanon: "The conflict with Israel is viewed as a central concern. This is not

only limited to the IDF presence in Lebanon. Rather, the complete destruction of the State of Israel and the establishment of Islamic rule over Jerusalem is an expressed goal" (Hizballah Programme, 16 December 1985). Indeed, Hizballah has a well-documented record of hostage-taking and targeted attacks against civilians, including diplomatic missions, in Lebanon and abroad.

In its campaign against Israel, Hizballah has resorted to cynically using civilian areas to provide a human shield for its terrorist activity, going so far as to launch attacks deliberately from populated places. This is in total violation of international norms, humanitarian principles and the 1996 April understandings. Indeed, the sovereignty of Lebanon as a whole is undermined when Syrian forces are deployed and are active inside its borders, using Hizballah as a proxy, and thereby perpetuating a conflict that sabotages the chances for bringing peace to the area. In fact, the acts of Hizballah are a direct attack on the current peace process, just as Hizballah's goals are in absolute opposition to any peace process, as Hizballah's programme makes clear.

"Our primary assumption in our fight against Israel states that the Zionist entity is aggressive from its inception, and built on lands wrested from their owners, at the expense of the rights of the Muslim people. Therefore our struggle will end only when this entity is obliterated. We recognize no treaty with it, no ceasefire, and no peace agreements, whether separate or consolidated. We vigorously condemn all plans for negotiation with Israel, and regard all negotiators as enemies ..." (Hizballah Programme, 16 December 1985). This policy was echoed in recent weeks by Sheikh Hassan Nassrallah, the Secretary-General of Hizballah, who stated: "There is no solution to the conflict in this region except with the disappearance of Israel" (Washington Post, 1 January 2000).

Nevertheless, the Governments of the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon openly support and encourage Hizballah. As recently as last week, Lebanese Prime Minister Salim El Hoss confirmed that "we officially back the resistance", in an interview with the Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram (Agence France Presse, 14 February 2000). Lebanon's Prime Minister has even praised the "jihad" of Hizballah (Voice of Lebanon, 16 February 1999).

I wish to recall the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970, providing that sovereignty carries a responsibility not to allow terrorist acts to be organized and prepared on one's territory, or launched from it. The deliberate support and arming of Hizballah stand in direct conflict with Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV) and international norms.

It should also be recalled that Security Council resolution 425 (1978) calls not only for the withdrawal of Israeli forces, but also for the restoration of international peace and security and the return of the effective authority of the Government of Lebanon in the area. The declared willingness of the Government of Lebanon to host an elaborate terrorist infrastructure, to permit its regular reinforcement and to endorse its operations against a neighbouring country, is totally incompatible with that Council resolution.

Coupled with its refusal to negotiate a peaceful solution, the policies of Lebanon, along with the Syrian Arab Republic's own support for Hizballah, leave Israel with no alternative but to exercise its right to self-defence in accordance with international law.

Nevertheless, we call upon the Governments of Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic to refrain from backing the enemies of peace, and to demonstrate a willingness to prevent further bloodshed, by engaging Israel at the negotiating table. This process remains the only hope for restoring peace and security along our border and preventing the tragic loss of life.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 43 and 160, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Aaron JACOB
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.